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strength for there the Bambara place the poles of attraction which, in the universe, uphold all bodies. It is said: "All bodies accept the force of attraction of the four angles," fari be bi sõ seleke nuni mana barika la.

which determined "the space of yo in its own thought," is expressed by the number 22: "yo, darkness of creation, in the depth of the secret space of night, master of the foundation of the 22 rotations, great bearer of vibration, great builder of the marrow of bones (1).

[782
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821]

1. yo dali dyibi, su kene gundo tyema, munumunu mu tani fla siki ba, yere done ba, kolow nye kono dlaba, kono being the ancient term for marrow.

This prayer is recited in honor of yo when a woman's pregnancy is first noticed; it is also recited at eclipses of the sun.

These 22 spirals stirred up all that yo contained in spirit; nugu, "entrails, intestines," which carried all things and man within itself; yafã, "seed of the air," which placed the voids in all /7/ parts of space"; fayã, "seed of the wind"; sani, "seed of water"; yerẽ, "seed of fire"; yelẽgu, "seed of earthly matter" (2). The rotations of yo

2. fayã, sani, yerẽ (in ancient language), and yelẽgu were at the origin of the four elements, air, water, fire and earth, all of which did not yet exist but were to appear later.

The seven elements composing yo are represented by signs, reproduced in Figure 1 (1 to 7).

put them in order and kept them under the force of attraction (mana). In other words, carried away by this whirlwind, both magnetic and creative, the elements became organized, one in relation to the other; in this way the 22 terms of the universe, as thought out by yo, were determined; these terms are also the 22 periods of its thought:

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taught certain agricultural techniques. In both tribes, the same star, Sirius (called sigi toto by the Dogon; sigi doto by the Bambara), represents them. The androgynous Faro is comparable in all ways to the Nommo, the universal monitor, custodian of the word and of life. The yurugu and the Nommo made voyages similar to those of Pemba and Faro. In particular, at the time of their descent on earth, the yurugu, and later the Nommo, used an "ark," [illegible]toto, whose counterparts are Pemba's wood pembele and Faro's ark kuru, described by certain initiates (see M. Griaule, L'Arche du monde chez les populations nigériennes. /The ark of the world among Nigerian peoples/.

For both tribes, man "the seed of the world," is the image of the cosmos. The exact role of the seed of the Acacia albida does not appear clearly in the two myths, but in both cases, it is considered to be a first aborted creation.

Faro's Reign

773 Faro, having vanquished the balanza and overcome Téliko, took over the creation himself. He reorganized the whole universe and established the order under which it still functions today. /27/ He spread his word and his light; he named and classified all things: "All things (of the universe) are under the domination of Faro; eight hundred transformations are in his power" (1).

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1. Fêw be be faro ka se kono, yelemani ba kele be a la a fe.

The number 800 which is "the end of the count," here expresses the infinite. In the so-called "eastern number system," now

T13 sat down in the middle of the cardinal point."

4. A ye klali ke.

The first sky, kaba noro, is less pure than the others and the impure traces of Mousso Koroni's passage, in the form of clouds, have remained there. From that sky comes the wind which Pemba had placed there while pursuing her.

But the second sky, kaba dye, "the white sky," is fresh and already in Faro's power. It is the seat of the souls (ni) of men and animals. The Kwore spirits live there and strive to permit the passage of rain as it falls on earth from the seventh heaven.

The third, kaba fi, "the black sky," is the resting place of all spirits, and the fourth, kaba mana ("shedding of the sky," is the mirror of the other three. There, Faro does his daily "accounting" of the world.

In the fifth sky, koblekaba, "the red sky," Faro hands out judgments on those who have broken the laws. It is the sky of struggles, battles and victories—the sky to which the king offered sacrifices before going to war. It is also the sky of blood, fire, and hot and harmful winds.

In the sixth sky, suna kaba, the secrets of the world situation are kept (1). As its name indicates, it is also the sky of sleep. All the

1. Dyẽ dyoka gundo be sunakaba la.

souls of spirits and living beings sleep there, each in an allotted place. [827] Sleep /29/ is a purification of the soul and dreams are the directives given to it by Faro. Fainting spells, insomnia, and illness are the result of disturbances in the displacement of souls during sleep.

The seventh sky, wolõ fla kaba, is the site of Faro's reign and the seat of power, royal power in particular. From this sky, the realm of purifying water, Faro sends forth over the world the beneficial rain that brings a soul to the grain.

• [821] The sun, to which Faro "holds the rope," penetrates the first sky in the morning and crosses all the others successively until evening when it skinks into the seventh. It is the god Pemba who, weary of his pursuit of Mousso Koroni, turns red. The stars are his pores, dilated by effort.

The following day, in order to give thanks to Faro, the villagers went to the edge of the well to the sound of drums and sacrificed the animal. The water swelled, seethed up, and formed a streat which still runs into the Niger today.

The composition of Faro's body determines the behavior of men in the rituals performed in his honor. While the usual offerings of blood, tomatoes, raw cereal mash, and baked cakes are consumed by him and returned to the givers in the shape of material possessions (children, millet, rain) or spiritual possessions (preservation of the souls of the living and the dead), the choice content of the offerings or sacrifices, the albino and copper, are reserved only for him and help increase his strength and stimulate his action. /44/ He absorbs them for his own sake; thus it is said that: "copper and albino are the sacrificial privileges of Faro."

Manifestations of Faro

All the atmospheric manifestations in the sky are evidence of Faro's presence and power. Rain, thunder, squalls, hail, and the rainbow all demonstrate his action. The lightning that bursts forth in the koblenkaba is a weapon, a small axe (sempere ni or dyele dẽ čini) which he throws from the top of the sky. If lightning strikes, it is a proof of his revenge. In the tree, the lightning hits the gecko (ala jugu), an evil animal which, when it lives in homes near the hearth, supposedly stirs up fires of conflagration. When lightning strikes men, it is in punishment for the breaking of a taboo. The stone axes, found at the point where lightning strikes, are collected and kept in the sanctuaries of the rain altars, to be used in case of drought or in the course of seasonal rites. They are also placed in the seeded fields, so that their strength, by communicating itself to the seed, may be beneficial to germination.

On earth, Faro is conceived of as a unique being whose principal home is the Niger; he is present everywhere. In practice, the Bambara believe that a spirit haunts each torrent, pond, or well, each gourd of water, each dewdrop; they call him dyi tigi, "master of water."

776 He takes on many forms. He can be seen in the brush as a gazelle feeding on wild tomatoes and onions. As a ram with golden fleece and wearing ear ornaments, he travels underground along gold veins. As a young and seductive woman he goes to the villages to seduce the boys and take them away with him. He is the head of the fleeting torrent that runs after a rainfall; he is the seething and swelling of the currents. He can be recognized in the bluish haze that floats above the ponds. A stream that dries up is a sign of his anger.

Faro's Realm

776 821 At the beginning, the waters that originated in the "central springs of the sky" and streamed over the earth, were pure, clear, beneficial and "easy." But after Mousso Koroni's betrayal and that of the beings who listened to her, impurity was communicated to the earth /45/: the water that covered the earth clouded, changed color, and became "difficult." It either dried up or, on the contrary, flooded the land, drowning living beings.

Today only the streaming rain water has preserved its character, more especially the first rain that falls at the beginning of winter. [783] It is considered a purifying agent par excellence and is called dane sandyi, "water that sows," for it brings to the grains their soul, ni; the earth, sterile and "empty," becomes full and fertile, plants are reborn, animals and insects multiply (1).

[577] 1. A person who is generous and good is referred to as being like this first rain. It is also said of the spirit: "the spirit [is good like] the first rain" (miri dane sandyi).

The terrestrial waters, Faro's kingdom, are classified into seven distinct realms. They are in layers which correspond to the seven parts of the sky and earth.

The first, dyi woyo "seething water," is surface water: it seethes when Faro makes himself known, and overflows in floods, as the heads of streams are swelled by the storm. [783] It is also the lustral water used for purification and the water drawn for drinking.

The second, dyi ble "red water," is Faro's copper, a reflection of koblenkaba or "red sky." It is similarly the seat of the spirit's warlike or punitive activities. Water of wrath and vengeful action, it drowns the guilty. Through it, Faro strikes the bodies and health of those who do not recognize his dominion.

Faro prefers to sojourn in the dyi fi, "black water," where he keeps his secrets. It is to this water that one prays to seek grace. It is from the dyi fi that the twelve future waters will flow.

Calm and felicity reign in the dyi sumane, "cold water," where the fish live. The dya of earthly bwings are preserved in it.

While Faro drowns those he punishes in the dyi ble, it is in the madũ (literally, person, to eat) that their bodies rot or become the prey of fish.

The sixth category of water, kosira (literally, thing of fear) is a jail. In it Faro temporarily places all that comes under his domination.

The seventh water, dyi wolofla, corresponds to the seventh heaven.

In the Niger, the places inhabited by Faro bear the general name of faro tyin. These are mostly deep depressions, well known to the shore dwellers, particularly the Bozo. /46/ Sometimes a consecrated stone, placed on the shore, receives the sacrifices offered to the spirit.

The most celebrated is a place called Souko, located upstream from Koulikoro near the village of Kayo. The local spirit engendered all that now lives in the river. Because of this he is worshipped by all Bozo and Somono fishermen, who used to send delegations to the annual sacrifice that took place during the dry season.

The Faro of Ségou lives in the Faka, a deep hole located close to the right bank, facing the town. Legend has it that the Faka is extended by tunnels: one links the river to the Bani while the other opens out at Dya and was used by the founders of the settlement in mythical times.

The Faka is placed under the guardianship of a crocodile to which each year the inhabitants offered victims. At the bottom of the hole there is a fat blind scaleless polyo, which the fishermen always return to the water if they catch it in their nets "because it is Faro's gate-keeper." In olden times, a flat stone upon which were traced a representation of Faro and black dots equal in number to the inhabitants of Ségou was visible in the deepest part of the waters. On this occasion an albino was sacrificed (by slitting his throat) and the first fruits of the harvest were offered to the spirit.

291 activity is not involved. Nevertheless, a woman puts on an indigo
773 loincloth the day she resumes sexual relations with her husband after
822 the end of her menses; she retains it until pregnancy. When she is sure
531 of her condition, she puts the loincloth in the sun to purify it and will place the newborn child in it to remind him later that he owes his life to his parents. A dead person who has broken a taboo is buried
[764 in an indigo shroud, the only reminder of light being a white cotton
784] thread which is placed on the corpse as an expression of apology and forgiveness. Since indigo is taboo in most of Faro's sacred places, no one wears it during sacrifices or religious ceremonies.

White and indigo complement each other. To twist a white and
[789] an indigo thread together to make a string used for holding an amulet is to "roll together happiness and unhappiness, as in life."

The dye wolo is the color of yellow copper. It is in this color that the newly circumcised are dressed after the operation and until they are healed. Red, mbegu, is the color of copper and of blood. Hunters who wear a tunic of mbegu are "covered with a garment of blood." The band kayo (Pl. III, a, 1), in which are found these two colors, indigo and white, reproduces the rainbow: the white intervals are symbols of the word and of purity. /110/ A person making a sacrifice sews a piece of this band on his clothing to indicate that he is circumcised, that he is a hunter, and that he is truthful in his actions and words. A band is hung at the gate of the northern entry to the village in order to protect its inhabitants from dangers coming from outside. A man wears it when he has been ill or has suffered serious financial or family difficulties. On the altars, on the doorways, the colors are represented by millet mash, blood, and kola nut extract.
[821 As the rainbow keeps away the rain and dries up water, the kayo
784] strip may not be worn near the river or during sexual intercourse, for it is Faro's taboo.

The band sirakele (literally, a road) (Pl. III, a, 2) represents Faro's descent from the seventh part of the sky down to the seventh part of the earth, the indigo stripe being the dyi fi, "black water," the spirit's earth seat. When put on the loincloth of a married woman, it expresses her rectitude and the good behavior she intends to maintain towards her husband. When worn by a traveler, it prevents him from losing his way.

291 The buguni (1) (Pl. III, a, 3) is "the sun ray Faro gave to Pemba
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1. The word designates the band's place of origin, Bougouni.

291 for his great earthly labors." When clouds form, it is said that Faro
773 "is showing the buguni in the sky" and the diviners advise each person
821 to wear a strip in homage to the spirit and to facilitate the coming of
531 rain. The geomaneer gently rubs the earth, where he is going to draw signs, with a cloth of this design. It is as though he has injected sun, light, and truth into the work he must execute on the impure soil.

291 This band is also called kolõso mako, "necessity of the mixture, "
773 or kami, guinea hen, whose plumage as well as whose fragility the band betokens. In this respect, the buguni symbolizes man's weakness and incompleteness. When placed on a convalescent's clothing,
[155] it signifies that the latter has lost some of his vitality during his illness. Dressed in this fashion, he goes to the Niger and bathes so that Faro might heal him. A man who has suffered severe financial losses also wears the buguni. At the market, in public meetings, he will not be made to pay his share of beer because of the band's silent language which is clearer than words. If a widower remarries, he sews a piece of it on his cap in memory of his first wife. The knife of the person offering a sacrifice is wrapped in the buguni, for it "never has enough blood, " also in certain boli which continually crave it.

/111/ In conclusion, the squares of indigo cloth represent the void and darkness; the white ones, fulfillment and light. To wear the buguni signifies hope, the impure or weak man hoping to become pure, strong, and fulfilled.

The bugunimba (literally, large buguni) or nyedẽ (literally, threads of the eye) has the same symbolism. A wound is bandaged with it. A man who has broken a taboo wears a cap of this material; an illegitimate child also wears it. The buguni tyekorole which symbolizes the impurity of Mousso Koroni is used to implore Faro's help in great calamities and for misfortunes without remedy. Thus, the body of a stillborn child is covered with it.

291 The buguni nyama (Pl. III, a, 4), made of twenty-two alternating
773 indigo and white squares, symbolizes creation in its harmonious and
822 orderly entirety. Its separation into two layers recalls the duality of
801 nature, represented by a thin stripe through the middle. A happy man sews an entire strip into his tunic. The man who has difficulties of any kind divides it lengthwise and pins a small piece at the bottom of his garment.

/166/ The Kwore

794 The Kworè society, kwore dye (literally, reunion of the Kworè) consists of individuals around the altars (kwore boli) on which rites 821 are performed concerning the skies, space, the cardinal points, the atmospheric manifestations of Faro, and particularly rain. Kworè literally means "dried up pond."

The rituals are intended for the Kworè spirits who depend upon Faro and who live in the kaba fin (third sky). They are in charge of watching over the rains sent from the wolofla kaba (seventh sky), which cross the other skies and "the void" before reaching the earth. The spirits struggle in the skies and in space against the mahalakillen of the koblenkaba (fifth sky) who try to stop the water. Lightning, thunder, and thunderbolt are the effects of these struggles.

794 The principal ceremonies take place around a tree, called kwore 778 yigi, which is situated to the east of the village and is the usual habitation of the spirits when they descend to receive men's offerings. The altars are placed in a hut built in the bush; other samples of these are kept in the chief's residence. A large stone, kwore fara, located near the village and placed in the ground above some symbolic objects, also receives offerings. The Kworè society is the owner of a communally cultivated field, in which small millet, safiõ, is exclusively sown and the harvest of which is kept for the needs of the cult.

A chief, the kwore tigi, is entrusted with the care of the altars and performance of the ritual.

A. The Altars

The altars of the kwore are placed in a sanctuary called buku sãmpere ni (literally, little hut of thunder) and situated at a certain distance from the village because of the dangers from lightning. The door is low and very narrow so that the forces held within may not escape.

The altars are composed of the following objects:

1. A large sac of the skin of a male goat, kwore boli sãmpere, open at its upper extremity and suspended by a boa skin (miñã) which symbolizes lightning. This sac, which has three compartments, contains copper, water from the Niger, rain water, and the "thunder stones" of the society. The "thunder stones," sãmpereni or sãmpere

304 The foreskin, which is tied by a string (drawn at the center of the
532 blade) at the moment of the operation, is placed upon the pembele
413 (black rectangle) and the cutting knife is tapped with a small wooden mallet, gossilã (drawn at the tip of the knife). These three figures receive during operation the offering of the first spurt of blood from the circumcised boy.

The line, which crosses the blade along the middle, separates the bird and the ancestors who gave proof of courage from the instruments used for the circumcision. As a division it symbolizes first of all that each grade of circumcised boys must be considered apart from the others. This is its social meaning. But the delicacy of the line itself has a meaning which applies to the individual: each one must, in his own image, be morally /183/ simple, just, and sensitive. By conforming to the rule symbolically indicated by the design, the individual will become a member of the elite.

304 The date of the operation is fixed when Mousso Koroni's star, sigi
787 dolo (Sirius), rises in the evening at a certain point in the east (1).
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1. See note 1 p. 47. To determine the date, however, the ndomo society may be consulted, which sometimes postpones it to keep its members longer.

After the boys to be operated have been counted, each gets ready, and on the appointed day the mother washes her son's penis with water in which an iron axe or hoe has been soaked. Then she prepares a dish
[262] of rice, ye farina to "dish of man's bravery," which the child eats before he is led to the place of the operation, called yorola sakole "reserved place," located in the bush.

304 When all are gathered together the blacksmith-circumciser operates
326 upon each one in turn after he has made them sit down in a circle on the ground. Pulling and twisting the foreskin, he ties it with the string which he keeps taut by securing its extremity between his toes. He next places the member upon the pembele, rests the knife /on the foreskin/ and taps /it/ with the wooden mallet. In this way he cuts off the foreskin while saying the following words:

"Circumcised one, your father, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, the father of that one too, the ear (the genitals) of the ancestors of the latter have withstood (the pain); you, yourself, withstand it as

766 In fact, if he dies far away his breath cannot be captured nor can the
167 successive transfers be made. For this reason the family head disclaims all responsibility in such a case by warning those who are about to leave for along time of the impossibility of fulfilling his duties toward them.

766 Nevertheless, a ritual has been instituted for the young men obliged to leave the family groups because of military service. The case is submitted to the chief of the Komo and the party concerned has two goats sacrificed over the altars. While the blood runs, the chief asks the Komo to watch over the soul and to be willing to reclaim it as it would if the person died among his family.

[187] If the news of the death of an absent person spreads, the family questions the Komo through divining procedures to find out if the soul has returned and if, by this fact, order has been reestablished.

Death by Lightning and Drowning

761 Death which occurs in certain ways considered abnormal and a
766 proof of Faro's wrath does not permit the reincarnation of the spiritual principles. This is true of men killed by the Komo for sorcery, and of people struck by lightning for having broken a taboo of Faro's. Their /201/ soul and their double are lost forever to their descendants, and their bodies thrown into the common grave.

Drowning is either accidental or due to Faro's wrath, in which case the corpse is returned with the nose and navel cut. In both instances, the double preserved in the water is not lost, but sacrifices are necessary for the return of the soul and of the double to a child in the family.

If the body has not risen to the surface, the father of the drowned person has the right to mourn him only when all the rituals have been performed. He asks the chief of the Komo to intercede with Faro to obtain his permission to search for the body in the water. He offers seven tomatoes which the chief throws into the water in exchange for the corpse in the presence of seven elders of his age grade. Some Bozo mobilized for this purpose dive in to bring back the body. The chief cuts the nose and the navel which he throws into the water as an offering. Then the corpse is placed flat on its stomach and pressed vigorously to extract the water, for to bury it full of water is equivalent to "burying rain" and dooming the countryside to drought.

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755 "(1) I have stated elsewhere that among Negro beliefs

1. Raffenel, op. cit., p. 463.

the tradition of the state of possession was carefully preserved. One evening I was present at a ceremony designed to drive a devil out of a woman's body. Father Niany, the universal man of Foutobi, was the exorcist. At the first rumor of this event, a throng converged on the woman's hut and I joined the crowd, curious to see what was going to happen. I saw a wretched woman rolling about on the ground in terrible convulsions in the midst of a circle of onlookers who let her thrash about without trying to help and merely watched her movements. There was great excitement when Niany appeared, and the circle opened to let him pass. He approached the woman, touched her, said a few words in a low voice, lifted her and placed her on a mat.

"The woman at once became calm, and father Niany, who seemed not at all impressed by his triumph, withdrew after speaking a few words in her ear. The crowd melted away, also without showing the least surprise at such complete and prompt success. I conclude that such happenings were not at all infrequent and that Niany had a special talent for driving devils out of women's bodies. I cannot [146] say what her trouble was, but when I saw her I thought that she was simply having an attack of epilepsy and I did not recognize the usual symptoms of that dreadful malady in the sort of convulsions she was having."

791 609 Though he was sure of his art, Niany nevertheless recognized its hazards. There is no magician who does not find another who is more powerful. A foreigner, that unknown creature, is a danger, because he may chance to possess secrets which might invalidate the cleverest methods. That is why Niany fears Islam. He has an idea, which to us seems strange, of what Allah may be, as compared to a miscreant like himself and, being persuaded of the continuity of matter, he applies it in a manner that we shall describe in the chapter on Islam.

791 609 821 Though he may have his doubts about Islam, Niany is no less suspicious of the maneuvers of the foreigner, Raffenel, who is staying with him.

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"(1) One morning he came and complained bitterly that

1. Raffenel, op. cit., p. 322.

I was preventing the rain from falling and that I was causing a lot of trouble to the villagers. I could not imagine, at first, why he was thus berating me, but he explained. It was his considered opinion that the rain was very much annoyed with me for being too much interested in it. I was watching the raindrops and examining the clouds, and so the rain was getting its vengeance by refusing to fall. Father Niany resented my thermometers too, but his principal target was my barometer, to which he attributed all sorts of evil designs.

"On the following day he returned to the charge, accompanied by a deputation of farmers carrying their agricultural tools on their shoulders.

"'We've thought it all over,' said Niany, 'and we have decided that since you can stop the rain, you can also make it fall again. Therefore we have come to ask you to speak to the rain in our name.'" ....

"Two days later there came another deputation, but one which, this time, looked threatening. Among them were some [147] new faces.

"'We want you to make it rain,' said the leaders, with an angry glance at my barometer, 'for we have already waited too long. You will never convince us that what you do with your machines (they pointed at my instruments), while you look up into the air and write down the grigri, is innocent. Never before in this country, has the rain held off so long from falling and no one has ever before done what you're doing. Manage it as you will, but we must have rain by tonight.'

"The sky was filled with heavy black clouds which reassured me. .... An hour later the rain fell, but those wretches, no doubt fearing that my presence would interfere with its good intentions, pushed me unceremoniously into my hut and shut the door. By this ridiculous step they prevented me from watching the progress of a wonderful storm and noting the barometric pressure changes.

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821 "Can one imagine being given such orders? All that was left for them to do was to ask for the moon and the stars."

Niany is typical of many Sudanese blacksmiths, at least
791 of those who actually practice their trade, and it is no wonder
326 that the natives keep people of that caste at a safe distance and show them consideration, fear and a degree of scorn. For the Blacks, people as well as things connected with magic are inclined to take many forms.

791 Hunters also are magicians. One need only see a hunter
224 start off to recognize that this is true. His person and his equipment are covered with amulets that constitute a covering as well as an arsenal of magic weapons.

825 The Blacks have a different idea of animals from ours;
778 they too are powers with which one has to reckon. In proof of this, there is no animal, however tiny, which cannot be, at some time or other, very dangerous and therefore worthy of respect. So animals are addressed as "master" or "lord." The
[552] animals always to be feared are never called anything else: wara-ba means lion; sa-ma, elephant; ma-li, hippopotamus; bam-ma, [148] crocodile. Etymologically, all these names indicate "master" or "lord."

These terms are not meaningless; they attest a belief that supernatural power is incorporated in animal species. The attentions paid to animals have no other purpose than that of
825 conciliating the good-will of this power or, at least, of avoiding
789 its wrath. The common practice of using animal debris (skin,
[237] horns, tail, hair, offal, etc.) to make magic charms is an application of the principle of continuity of matter, of the individual and of the virtues peculiar to them. A rabbit's foot is tied to a
[843] pregnant woman's side in order to hasten the child's arrival; a small bag of lion skin will make the child brave and strong.

It seems likely that the domestication of animals is a
231 happy result of magic practices. These tamed creatures are held
552 to be "weak ones" and are treated as such. However, some of
825 their names show a trace of the esteem in which they were once held and which is still shown on occasion: fa-li meaning "donkey" derives from fa meaning "powerful," just as nya-ri meaning "cat" derives from nya and has the same meaning, along with ba meaning "goat."

24 Lastly, the furuba are veritable brush fields where wide, extensive, and cyclical cultivation is carried out, the brush being cleared by burning. During the dry season, the trees are cut at 0.70 meters or 1 meter from the ground [28] without removing the stumps, so that the subsequent fallow period may be brief. The cut branches are piled by the stumps. After drying, the grass is set on fire. On old fields, millet stalks and high grass are piled up before setting the fire; then the ground is superficially loosened by hoeing, and the ashes are mixed into the soil. The first year millet and peanuts are sown, during the following years less rich crops until the soil is exhausted (by manioc).

The preparation of the soil and the sowing must be done very rapidly (in about three weeks or a month) at the beginning of the rainy season. Sometimes the farmer must hastily sow an insufficiently prepared field, being obliged to transplant later. Sowing time is [821] determined by the appearance in the sky of the Pleiades, which the Bambara call "the hen and the chicks." In the Macina region the sowing begins at a certain village and follows a route going successively from the south northwards, in a zigzag movement corresponding to the appearance of the rains.

In the brush fields, maize is planted, then fonio and coarse millet (sorghum), peanuts and small millet (Pennisetum), etc. (see below). In the fields, monoculture is practiced, or else the cultivation of associated crops: for example, black-eyed peas (Vigna unguiculati walp = V. Catjang) and okra (Hibiscus esculentus) with millets and maize; the da sauce (Hibiscus sabdariffa Linn) with fonio (Digitaria exilis); peanuts with underground peas. In some fields these crops are associated: millets, maize, black-eyed peas, cotton, underground peas, peanuts, sweet potatoes, manioc, and okra (each plant exploiting the soil at a different level).

Sowing is always preceded by familial sacrifices and general rites.

Harvest time is determined by the vegetative period of the plants, without regard to their apparent ripeness. Thus, errors often result when new varieties are introduced by the administration. Accordingly, the harvest date for peanuts, sweet potatoes, and yams

88| with honey water and milk. They go to the public square, the only ballroom known in Bambara country. The big boys, their heads freshly shaved and their bodies thoroughly greased and all shining, also arrive in a long line, and in the square there is nothing but indescribable bedlam, for all these people at once greet each other, talk and shout, and not a voice is in harmony.

[82] Young and old consult the canopy of stars, for although they are not astronomers they know that around midnight a certain star of the firmament is at such and such an angle, and they are impatient. Then the hour has come, and the male soli are crouched in the place of honor, and the young lady soli arrive in single file, their hair in disorder and their hips girded with paltry loincloths that reach from the knees up to the navel. The loincloths are gifts from the fiancé [292] of each one, and must be worn. Their colors vary, indicating the tribe and caste of each girl, so one can see that they are of some importance (1).

1. The Moslems have blue. The pure Bambara wants a yellow background with black rose shapes and lines.

[186] A Bambara woman is proud of her blood and proud of her tribe, and, wearing her loincloth in the national colors, a narrow cloth band of black stripes on a yellow background, she almost thinks she is a queen, if not a goddess, at the soli si. The girls' gait reflects this feeling: with heads high, eyes 15 paces ahead, chests stuck out like Prussians (they puff themselves up a little to bring out their charms), they admire themselves and are enraptured, each knowing that she is the focus of more than one shining eye full of desire. They advance slowly, raising a cloud of dust, and in her hands each one shakes a bag of goatskin and an iron box filled with little pebbles; her torso bends to the left and bends to the right. In the dark of the night as the little fires /179/ cast their gleams here and there, one might say that they are frail shells lost in the waves and tossed by the winds, struck by the swell and always ready to capsize.